

EDITORIAL: High-speed rail vote shows 3 supervisors stuck in past

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The Fresno Bee Editorial Board



SPECIAL TO THE BEE A view of the high speed rail shows the trains pulling into a station in this artist rendering.

SPECIAL TO THE BEE

A majority of Fresno County supervisors sent a chilling message to residents, particularly the young, at Tuesday's meeting.

With their votes to oppose California's high-speed rail project, Supervisors Andreas Borgeas, Phil Larson and Debbie Poochigian basically said that Fresno shouldn't become the nation's hub for high-speed rail technology and testing — thus casting aside the opportunity to create thousands of high-paying jobs in our county.

Though California High-Speed Rail Authority CEO Jeff Morales has said otherwise, we can't imagine that, after this vote, the authority will award its maintenance and testing facility to Fresno.

There are too many other communities that want the facility, the jobs and the national, if not universal, prestige that will follow, for the authority to reward a community whose elected leaders are dead-set against high-speed rail.

Tuesday's reversal by the board of its seven-year support for the project is typical of Fresno County leadership, which clings to 19th century economic models while the remainder of the world pushes ahead

in the 21st century.

The votes to oppose high-speed rail by Larson and Poochigian were expected. Their tea-party politics and penchant for catering to their agricultural constituents at the expense of other residents compels them to oppose most anything that isn't supported by a majority of farmers.

But Andreas Borgeas' opposition to the project was puzzling and disappointing. He vowed to lead the county in a bold new direction while campaigning for office in 2012. By joining with Larson and Poochigian, he instead offered more of the same-old, same-old that has contributed to our continued inability to maximize our wealth of natural resources, fantastic location in the heart of California and the talents of people residing here.

Wise, responsible leaders put aside their political leanings and do what's best for their constituents. A 5-0 vote reaffirming Fresno County's support of the high-speed rail project would have sent a message across the state that our county wants to be the nation's hub for high-speed rail testing, technology and education.

Such a vote would also have said loudly that Fresno is changing: We want — and can be — about more than agriculture, food processing, health care, tourism and residential development.

The board had an opportunity to embrace the future; instead, it clung to the past and thus limited the opportunities for young people now taking Career Technical Education classes in our schools and engineering courses in our universities.

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